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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#) [KWMN](#) [IR](#) [IS](#) [QT](#) [JO](#)  
SUBJECT: CODEL PELOSI DISCUSSES PEACE PROCESS, IRAN, REFORM  
WITH KING AND GOJ OFFICIALS

REF: AMMAN 994

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: During their May 7-8 visit to Amman, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Representative Rush Holt (R-NJ) met with King Abdullah, Senate President Zaid Al-Refai, and Lower House Speaker Abdulhadi Al-Majali. They heard optimism about the President's engagement on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict coupled with skepticism about the openness of the Netanyahu government to peace. Iranian influence and leverage in the region was also a topic of concern. While the group delivered helpful messages about our concern with the lack of progress on reform, their interlocutors soft pedaled their lack of support for change. End Summary.

Israel-Palestine  
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¶2. (C) Discussions with Senate President Zaid Refai and Lower House Speaker Abdulhadi Al-Majali focused primarily on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Refai noted a "180 degree change" in perceptions about American involvement in the peace process following the election of President Obama. He urged the Administration to make use of the strategic opportunity for progress on the ground, remarking that the "ingredients for peace are well known." Majali told the Speaker that Jordanians were tired of "suggestions and initiatives" and were looking for the end game to begin. Reflecting on the 1994 Wadi Arabah agreement that normalized relations between Jordan and Israel, Majali said that Jordan had "tried a warm peace," but was unable to point to any concrete benefits of this peace for the Palestinian cause.

¶3. (C) Refai voiced his displeasure with the tone of the Netanyahu government's statements on peace to date, saying that it was "against a Palestinian state in principle." He said that Netanyahu's proposals for economic rather than political engagement with the Palestinians were unacceptable and noted that such a policy would allow settlement activity to become "irreversible" and tie the hands of future Israeli leaders. Refai also opined that Netanyahu's use of President Shimon Peres as the public face of his foreign policy amounted to "sugar coating his policies."

¶4. (C) Refai and the King both mentioned the planned visit of Netanyahu to Jordan on May 13, saying that Jordan would be looking for some rhetorical deliverable as an outcome of the visit -- preferably a solid commitment to a two-state solution. Both predicted that such a statement would probably not be forthcoming at this stage, but said Jordan would keep pressing the Israelis.

Iran  
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¶5. (C) Every Jordanian official voiced concern about Iranian influence in the region. The King noted Iranian President

Mahmoud Ahmedinejad's recent visit to Syria, which he claimed was designed to shore up relations and strategize on peace process issues. (Note: The King also paid a visit to Syria on May 11 to talk about the same subjects. End Note.) Queen Rania stated her belief that the popularity of President Obama has resulted in muted Iranian criticism of the United States in recent months. Refai said that sanctions and incentives were ultimately worthless when dealing with Iran, whose intention was to "revive the Persian Empire." Majali seconded that opinion, adding that Iran "only pretends to support the Palestinians" and uses the issue to further its own political reach. Speaking about the recent Arab League meeting in Doha in April, Majali worried that Qatar was playing with fire by trying to serve as a bridge between Iran and the Arab world.

Reform

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¶16. (C) Responding to the Speaker's questions about the issue of honor crimes in Jordan, both Majali and Refai blamed lack of education and societal mores for the ongoing problem. Deflecting personal responsibility for the issue, Refai noted that "social problems have nothing to do with economics, politics, or religion." Even so, Refai admitted that loopholes in the penal code resulted in light sentences for the perpetrators of honor crimes. He voiced support for a package of amendments to the penal code that, among other things, would close those loopholes.

¶17. (C) Majali, an outspoken opponent of reform, attempted to soft pedal his lack of commitment to political change when

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pressed for his views by the Speaker. He optimistically noted that political freedom in Jordan was "comparatively better than other countries in the region." Blatantly ignoring his own recent pursuit of legal action against a journalist who accused him of corruption, Majali said that Jordanians "can say anything" and have the "right to criticize" (Ref A).

Afghanistan/Pakistan

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¶18. (C) The group also discussed the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan during a dinner with the King and Queen. The Speaker outlined the recent visits of Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Pakistani President Asif Zardari to Washington and spoke about the need to fight corruption in the region. The King expressed support for a strong Afghan government able to combat the tide of extremism.

¶19. (U) Codel Pelosi was unable to clear this cable before departing Jordan.  
Beecroft